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Annual COULEE EXPERIMENTAL STATE FOREST Public Notification of Activities and Work Plan

Nearly 3,000 acres in size, the Coulee Experimental State Forest (CESF) plays an important role in providing and sustaining many ecological, economic and social benefits in the area. The forest contributes to local and statewide economies through logging of certified forest products, provides habitat for a range of native plant and animal species and offers a variety of recreational opportunities.

CESF ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2009

The 15-year Master Plan was completed and accepted by the Natural Resources Board in May, 2009. This is the first plan update since 1978. The planning process included public information and comment sessions at the Bangor Town Hall. Copies of the plan are free and available from DNR Forester Jim Dalton, at the LaCrosse DNR Service Center or telephone 785-9007.

The approved Master Plan *projects new boundaries for possible land purchases* from willing sellers to increase the CESF acreage.

Dead and hazard trees were felled along the entire XC-Ski Trail network for public safety. The ski trail is open for hiking and horseback riding during non-snow seasons, though no water or toilet facilities exist. Trail users should be aware of the various Wisconsin hunting seasons to avoid surprise by hunters in the vicinity.

The possibility of *building and placing kiosks for public information posting* at commonly visited spots has been discussed. Vandalism destroyed kiosks in the past, but new designs and locations may prove more sustainable.

Timber damaged by the 2008 tornado on the south end of CESF was salvaged in 2009. The salvage harvest involved 3 timber sales amounting to 134 acres and 315 MBF of sawtimber. (White oak seedlings were planted in spring of 2010 in some of the openings left by the storm).

The *fire suppression agreement* with West Salem Fire Dept. was updated with the current FD officers.

Invasive Species Control efforts continued on 15 acres of garlic mustard on west side...the 4th spraying of this site in preparation for thinning the red pine plantation. Autumn olive control continued along road and field edges by contractor and DNR crew.

Observations indicate that autumn olive is now the major non-native species threat on CESF. Local Endangered Resources staff received two funding grants to control this serious invader, particularly the open grown shrubs that spread lots of seed.

Horseback riding, hiking and dog-walking during non-snow seasons has increased significantly. Cross-country skiing has increased similarly during the winter. Parking lots are being used extensively for public access.

Prairie restoration at Berg Prairie is more active than ever with continual reduction of tree and non-native shrub species to increase prescribed burning efficiency.

2010 Work Plan

Most pressing work to be done is in forest management to reduce the backlog of mature timber harvest acreage needed to ensure a successful transition to new generations of trees.

The conifer plantation thinnings yet to be implemented have been marked for thinning; one of the three sales has been sold to a local logging contractor.

The ½ mile gravel road from Co. Rd. II to the ridge parking lot is to be torn up, rebuilt and surfaced with new gravel in autumn, 2010 with State Forest project funding.

Trail mowing has been reduced due to staff shortages, but the autumn mowing will be attempted as usual.
